

2019

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Recommended Citation

Gorman, Sara M. (2019) "His Secret*," *Digressions Literary Magazine*: Vol. 16 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/digressions/vol16/iss1/14>

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His Secret

Sara Gorman

His tire had gone flat that morning. He was late to work because of it, but his boss did little more than cast him a flat look of his typical disappointment when he strolled in. He knew the look all too well; his parents often wore it when they thought he wasn't looking. He shrugged. Internally, he told himself that it didn't bother him anymore.

That morning, his wife had asked him to pick-up bread after work. On any other day, he would have—gladly—however, because of his tire, he took a cab straight home. No, he did not fetch the bread from the store that evening. When he returned home empty-handed, her warm and welcoming smile cracked just briefly to reveal that same look of disappointment as his employer, though it was immediately masked with a cheery expression. He told himself that it didn't bother him anymore.

That night, his wife made love to him. While she moved into euphoria, he looked blankly into the ceiling, memorizing every miniscule crack in the chipped paint. Once she finished, she fell into a deep sleep and he crept quietly out of their bed and into the bathroom. He caught a brief glance of himself in the mirror. He wore a faint, disappointed expression that came all-too-often when his wife needed affection. Her constant need for physicality alluded him since the early days of their marriage, and, a decade later, gave him little satisfaction of his own. Still, he told himself that he loved his wife. It didn't bother him anymore.

Leaving the bathroom, he walked past his wife's sleeping form and into their shared closet. He stood there, taking deep breaths and counting quietly to himself. He'd hoped to will himself into a peaceful state there in the confines of that small, squared space. He'd hoped to find solace in the scent of his wife's dresses and his perfectly ironed shirts. And so, he remained there, in the closet and he counted—from one to one thousand—with the faint sound of his wife's snoring pacing his rhythm.

One...two...three...

After some time there, counting, he found himself on the floor of the closet. Suddenly, he felt compelled to move himself to the far-right wall of the small space. On his knees, he crawled to the small black box that his wife despised. He caressed it, the cool feeling of the box exciting him. He could feel his heart rate quicken as his fingertips moved sensually over the edges of the box. Abruptly, he heard his wife's snores falter—he froze, sucking in a quick gasp of air. Soon, however, her breathing returned to its same peaceful pace and he released the breath he had been holding. He looked down at the black box in his lap. Logically, he knew that he should return it to the safe place in which he kept it. He also knew that his wife would redden with unwavering frustration if she caught him there. He didn't like to upset his wife. Nevertheless, he sat there, caressing the box and relishing in the coolness of the feel under his fingertips. On a usual night, this was enough; he could sit silently with the box in the closet and the next morning his wife would greet him with a loving, unknowing smile and gentle kiss. On a typical night, he could convince himself that it didn't bother him anymore.

Tonight, however, he needed more.

He stood, in nothing more than his night-pants and a plain gray t-shirt, deciding that tonight he would finally leave that closet. In his left hand, he grabbed a pair of shoes; in his right hand, his fist was clenched tightly around the handle of the black box. He moved swiftly down the steps and out of his house unconsciously grabbing his wife's keys.

His body did not feel like his own as he revved the engine of her small car and yanked on the gearshift.

It was as if his body was leading him tonight. It was as though he was a famished man who had not eaten in days, and what he maniacally craved was nothing but what was sat inside of that small, black box.

Somehow, he found himself in the parking lot of a supermarket that stayed open for 24 hours. Despite the late hour, he saw several people rushing inside, undoubtedly to pick-up items such as bread and milk that had been forgotten earlier in the evening. He decided that he too would go inside to retrieve the bread his wife had asked him to purchase. First, however, he looked to the small black box in the passenger seat. It was time.

He reached for the box, his hand trembling as though he were reaching to touch a woman for the very first time. When his fingertips connected with the cool feel of the box's hard material, he sighed. One hand became two, and soon he was caressing the box with both palms. Still, he needed more. He opened the box and released an audible whimper. Yes, he was as afraid of what lay inside the box as he was enkindled by it. With a shaking hand, he reached for it. When his fingers finally connected with it, he thought he may burst with excitement. He looked to the ceiling of his wife's car but struggled to see beyond the stars of ecstasy that now clouded his vision.

Suddenly, he was jolted out of his state of jubilation by the sound of laughter. It came from a young woman, probably twenty years of age. She seemed to be laughing at another woman who had dropped a container of eggs onto the concrete of the parking lot. He sighed at their foolish scene and grumbled to himself. He supposed that he should go inside and buy that loaf of bread, finally. As he reached for the handle of the car door, he looked down at the treasure in his lap. Logically, he knew that he should return it to its box. He had obtained his fix, and that feeling that overcame him should not have eaten at him anymore. However, he could not bring himself to put the source of his veneration away just yet. To do so would feel like rebuffing a woman after a wonderful date. Thus, he made the decision to place it inconspicuously into his pocket. There was no harm in bringing it with him, just this once.

While he moved through the market, he felt incredibly devilish. He felt as though he were carrying around a secret to which no one else was privy. The thought aroused and excited him. He felt as though he were on fire. When he found his wife's favorite bread, he walked to the check-out line and was faced with a shocking number of other patrons. Only one cashier was working the night shift. He groaned silently to himself, anticipating an hour or so of standing in line to buy a single loaf of bread.

Just as he had earlier in the evening, he suddenly felt that familiar compulsion to reach for that small black box. He ached to caress it, to feel the coolness of the box. Unfortunately,

he realized that he had left the box in his wife's car. The content of the box, however, was just inside the pocket of his sleep pants. Attempting to move as discreetly as he could, he placed a hand into his pocket and felt his secret. Again, he was renewed with excitement. He wondered to himself, what would happen if— just for a moment—he pulled it out of his pocket. He pondered if anyone would notice or if they would remain absorbed in their own worlds. He figured they wouldn't—oh no, but he shouldn't!

He decided to count to himself to calm down; he was beginning to become illogical. He closed his eyes and focused on the *beep* of the conveyer belt.

One...two...three...

On a usual night, he would never have been this daring. On a typical night, he could have convinced himself that it didn't bother him anymore. He could have deluded himself into believing that caressing the cool steel of his secret was satisfactory. Tonight, however, he needed more.

He reached into his pocket and pulled out his secret.

No one seemed to notice.

He placed it just behind the head of the person in front of him. He heard a loud gasp from some direction. Perhaps someone knew what was coming, perhaps they even tried to stop him. Unfortunately for everyone, it was already too late. He pulled the trigger. The scene erupted into chaos. He heard screams as people threw themselves to the ground.

He pulled the trigger again...and again...and again.

It felt orgasmic. He smiled.

In the distance, he heard the sound of his wife lovingly calling his name.

And then, alas, in his closet, he awoke.